

NATO, in truth, is now at the crossroads of its existence. If it is to be forward, and in the right direction, it must concentrate on ways and means of bringing its members closer together politically, without weakening its defence unity and strength. For this purpose the Council must become a more effective agency for consultation and co-operation than it has been.

It must be given more authority and its meetings, with ministerial attendance, should be more frequent. Through the Council, consultation should be developed into an accepted custom, to the point where no member would think of taking action which affected the others in any substantial way—either politically or economically—without prior discussion with those members in NATO.

No Great Changes Needed

For this purpose I do not see the need for any substantial organizational changes or for any amendments to our treaty. Nor do I think that NATO should try to make special economic arrangements between its members or be charged with the duty of removing trade barriers. There are other international agencies which have been specially set up for this purpose—such as GATT and OEEC—and we do not want duplication. I doubt also whether NATO is the agency best equipped actually to provide aid to materially under-developed countries. In this matter, the United Nations should, I think, be brought more and more into the picture. I do not mean that the World Organization should be the sole or even possibly the major executive agency for international aid or replace practical and successful operations like the Colombo Plan. Its special value would be to provide a forum where all assistance plans could be co-ordinated and policies discussed. I think also that the

U.S.S.R. should be encouraged to participate fully in such United Nations discussions. It would give us a very good opportunity to test the nature and the substance of her participation in this field of international economic assistance.

The Role of NATO

In political and economic consultation NATO's role, as I see it, is more limited, but more precise and politically more significant in that here discussions are between closely co-operating friends who are trying to bring about not merely the co-ordination, but the closest possible identity of plans and policies. As the mechanism for this process NATO can become the foundation for the Atlantic community of the future. It must in fact develop along these lines or it will drift into futility and may ultimately share the fate of other international agencies which disappeared because their roots were not deep enough for survival and growth.

May I close with a story, substituting only one or two words in the original, to fit this particular occasion:

"Making her debut at a NATO meeting, a young matron sat silently through a two hour discussion of the Atlantic community. Afterward, she thanked the women to whose spirited pros and cons she had listened.

'I'm awfully glad I came,' she said, 'because I was so terribly confused about the Atlantic community. Of course, she confessed, 'I'm still confused, but on a much higher plane.'"

If after my talk you are still confused, as you may well be, I dare to hope that it is on a much higher plane.